

Message Text

SECRET

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FM USDEL SECRETARY

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T USUN SECTO 13022

NODIS CHEROKEE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ACP FORMAT LINE SIX SHOULD READ USDEL
SECRETARY VICE USMISSION USUN NEWYORK)

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI CARGOES THROUGH SUEZ CANAL

1. I WANT YOU TO GO BACK TO FAHMY AGAIN ON THE QUESTION OF
FIXING A DATE FOR THE PASSAGE OF A SHIP WITH CARGO FOR
ISRAEL THROUGH THE SUEZ CANAL. YOUR APPROACH SHOULD BE CAST
IN TERMS OF OUR FULL UNDERSTANDING FOR THE PROBLEMS THIS
CAUSES THE EGYPTIANS AND SHOULD BE DONE AS HUMANLY AS
POSSIBLE, BUT YOU SHOULD LEAVE NO DOUBT THAT THIS IS AN AB-
SOLUTELY CRITICAL QUESTION THAT MUST BE FACED UP TO AND CANNOT
BE PUT OFF ANY LONGER. IF NECESSARY AFTER YOU HAVE HAD A
MEETING WITH FAHMY, YOU SHOULD ASK TO SEE SADAT AND MAKE THE
SAME APPROACH DIRECTLY TO HIM. YOUR APPROACH SHOULD BE ALONG
THE FOLLOWING LINES.

2. WE ARE PLEASED THAT THE DETAILS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE AGREEMENT HAVE NOW BEEN SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED IN THE
GENEVA WORKING GROUP. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS INVOLVED SOME
TOUGH DECISIONS FOR THE EGYPTIANS AND GIVE THEM FULL
CREDIT FOR THEIR FOREBEARANCE AND BUSINESSLIKE APPROACH.

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OUR OWN INTERVENTIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS WERE, WE BELIEVE,

INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR POSITION IN THE WORKING GROUP, AND WE ARE CERTAIN THE EGYPTIANS NOTED THE CHANGES IN THE ISRAELI APPROACH THERE FOLLOWING OUR EFFORTS WITH THEM.

3. WE NOW NEED EGYPTIAN UNDERSTANDING AND HELP. UP TO NOW WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CONTAINING ISRAELI EFFORTS TO INSIST UPON IMMEDIATE FULLFILLMENT OF EGYPT'S UNDERTAKING TO PERMIT NON-MILITARY ISRAELI CARGOES TO PASS THROUGH THE SUEZ CANAL. ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS WE HAVE KEPT THE ISRAELIS FROM MAKING A DECISION TO FREEZE EVERYTHING ELSE UNTIL THIS HAPPENED. THIS ISSUE CONTINUES TO FESTER, HOWEVER, IN ISRAEL AND IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND IF NOT QUICKLY RESOLVED WILL, WE FEAR, BE BLOWN SO OUT OF PROPORTION AS A POLITICAL ISSUE IN ISRAEL THAT EVERYTHING WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR WILL BE PLACED IN JEOPARDY. OF EQUAL SERIOUSNESS, THIS WOULD QUICKLY BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES FROM WHICH OUR CRITICS AND THE OPPONENTS OF THE RECENT AGREEMENT COULD BENEFIT. IF THIS HAPPENED, BOTH THE EGYPTIANS AND WE WOULD BE IN AN EXTREMELY VULNERABLE POSITION, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS.

4. THE PASSAGE OF ISRAELI NON-MILITARY CARGOES THROUGH THE CANAL IS NOW A PART OF THE PUBLISHED AGREEMENT. RIGHTLY OR WRONG, THE REALITY IS THAT OBSERVANCE OF THIS PROVISION WILL BE VIEWED AS A TEST OF THE VIABILITY OF THE AGREEMENT. ON THE BASIS OF ASSURANCES WE RECEIVED FROM PRESIDENT SADAT, WE TOLD THE ISRAELIS THAT A SHIP WITH ISRAELI CARGO COULD TRANSIT THE CANAL PRIOR TO THE KNESSET DEBATE ON THE AGREEMENT. THIS DID NOT AHPPEN, AND WHAT IS AT STAKE NOW IS ABOVE ALL THE GOOD FAITH OF THE UNITED STATES AND CONFIDENCE IN OUR ROLE. IT IS PAINFUL FOR US, AND FOR THE SECRETARY PERSONALLY, TO HAVE TO PRESS HIS FRIENDS FAHMY AND PRESIDENT SADAT ON THIS, KNOWING AS HE DOES THE AMOUNT OF CRITICISM IN THE ARAB WORLD THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN SUBJECTED TO -- CRITICISM WHICH IS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED -- FOR THEIR FARSIGHTEDNESS AND COURAGE IN CONCLUDING THE LATEST AGREEMENT. THE SECRETARY AS A FRIEND MUST GIVE THEM HIS BEST JUDGMENT, HOWEVER, THAT HAVING COME SO FAR IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY

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FOR THE PROCESS TO BEGIN TO BE REVERSED. THIS ISSUE IS SO SERIOUS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT COULD HAPPEN.

5. WITH GREAT EFFORT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING ISRAELI AGREEMENT TO THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE WHICH, IN OUR JUDGMENT, OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE OF RESOLVING THE CANAL TRANSIT QUESTION BEFORE IT BLOWS UP. WE NEED FROM

EGYPT BEFORE COMPLETION OF US CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON THE US PROPOSAL ON THE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM AND ISRAELI SIGNING OF THE GENEVA PROTOCOL A FIRM DATE ON WHICH A SHIP WITH ISRAELI CARGO CAN TRANSIT THE CANAL. THE ACTUAL TRANSIT DOES NOT NEED TO OCCUR WITHIN THIS PERIOD, BUT SHOULD BE FIXED NOW FOR A DATE WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER ISRAELI SIGNATURE, SINCE CONGRESS IS NOT LIKELY TO COMPLETE ITS WORK BEFORE OCTOBER 2. WE THEREFORE NEED TO BE GIVEN A DATE NOW FOR A TRANSIT AROUND OCTOBER 15 OR THE DATE PROPOSED BY FAHMY IN THE FIRST PLACE. THIS WOULD, IN FACT, BE ABOUT ONE MONTH AFTER THE TIME WHEN, BASED ON WHAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD TOLD US, WE HAD ASSURED ISRAEL THAT A CARGO COULD PASS, AND IT IS CLOSE TO THE TIME FAHMY AT ONE POINT RECENTLY INDICATED TO US THAT SUCH PASSAGE COULD TAKE PLACE.

6. AS WE HAVE SAID, WE ARE ASKING FOR EGYPT'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSITION WE ARE IN AND ITS HELP IN MAINTAINING OUR OWN BONA FIDES AT THIS POINT.
KISSINGER

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NNN

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